



For Immediate Release
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Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
“Back to Work for Children”

Mr. President, it was with sadness, and frustration, and even anger that I learned of President Bush’s veto this morning of the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

I am sad, because I am thinking first and foremost of the children who are without health coverage today. Those children could have had health coverage tomorrow, had the President signed this bill.

For now, thanks to this veto, these children will continue to go without doctor’s visits. They will go without the medicines that they need to stay healthy.

I have frustration, because we worked for months on our bipartisan CHIP agreement in the Senate. The House wisely adopted it. It was passed by overwhelming margins. It deserved better consideration by the President of the United States.

Instead, the carefully-crafted compromise that we sent to the White House became the subject of a campaign of misinformation. That campaign was designed to obscure the true help for families contained in our bill. And that is frustrating.

There is anger as well, because that is what so many parents in my home state of Montana, and all across America, have a right to feel today. I’m angry, because working families are angry. The pain of not being able to provide reliable health care for a child has to be excruciating.

The President had the power to end that pain for millions of parents today. Congress handed him the chance to help children get the health care that they need. The President said no.

That has to make hard-working parents angry. We all have a right to be angry — for a minute. And then we have to get back to work for America’s children.

The President has allowed politics to obscure the good that the Children’s Health Insurance Program does for low-income, uninsured American children. And he has allowed ideology to obscure the good that this bill could do for millions more.

We must take a different path. We cannot allow anger to get in the way of the work that must be done. There is too much at stake for our children.

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Regardless of the administration's objections, these are still the facts. Our Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act already does what the President has asked: It focuses coverage on the lowest income children — the original mission of CHIP. More than nine out of ten kids served by CHIP are in families earning less than twice the poverty level. It keeps CHIP for children by curbing and even eliminating adult coverage. And it takes great pains to reach children who are without insurance — not those who already have coverage. Our bill gives states incentives to find the low-income kids already eligible for CHIP.

We worked hard to craft a responsible bill, because we know the good that CHIP has done. And we will not give up on enacting it into law, because we see how much more good CHIP can do. After months of cooperation, Republicans and Democrats, the Senate and the House must work together again to override this ill-considered veto.

A poll released just yesterday says that nearly three out of four Americans support the approach in our bill.

How can the President turn a blind eye to those who need this bill the most? How can he deny them what they need more than anything: to be healthy?

How can he look into a mother's eye and say that he supports CHIP, while at the same time his hand strikes it down?

CHIP is the right answer for thousands of children in Montana and millions across the country. They need health coverage and care today.

So here in the Senate, we will do our part to override this veto. We're going to make the case to more Colleagues who should support this bill. We're going to bring together those who value kids over politics.

We will vote for America's children.

We will seek to end the sadness, frustration, and anger that so many families must feel over this veto.

We will tell them that the help and hope of the Children's Health Insurance Program is still possible for their own children.

M. President, we are not finished working for America's children.

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